

# We need the

# Employee FREE CHOICE ACT NOW!

**T**he hundreds of Verizon Business workers who underwent a “private hell” when they tried to form a union in 2007 and 2008 know all too well: workers don’t have same rights as employers when it comes to choosing union representation.

That’s what the Employee Free Choice Act will restore.

Labor law provisions that are supposed to protect workers’ organizing rights proved to be non-existent for more than 600 technicians at the company. “We went through a meat grinder of employer intimidation,” said CWA Local 1107 member Roger Reece, who was illegally threatened by a supervisor that he could be fired for trying to form a union.

During a two-year campaign, a majority of more than 1,000 Verizon Business technicians from New York to Boston signed authorization cards demanding union recognition. This action first was ignored by the company — despite strong support for the workers’ cause by members of Congress and elected officials from many communities — then answered by a Verizon management campaign of harassment directed at union supporters.

Verizon Business workers eventually won union recognition through an agreement reached between CWA and Verizon as part of 2008 contract negotiations, but existing labor laws did nothing to protect workers during their two-year campaign. It took the support and solidarity of more than 65,000 union workers at the core Verizon company to help Verizon Business workers get their union.

## ‘We Went Through A Meat Grinder of Intimidation’



*Verizon Business technicians Roger Reece, above, and John Lindner, feared being fired when they and coworkers organized for union representation in 2007-2008.*



CWA Local 1107 member Chris Bloncourt, was threatened with termination simply because he posted a pro-union handout inside Roger Reece’s cubicle at their work location in Monsey, N.Y. The experience terrified the seven-year employee who had never been disciplined at work for anything. “I was terrified after I was called into my supervisor’s office. They said this was a verbal warning, the next time it would termination,” he recalled.

Immediately after the incident, some of Bloncourt’s co-workers were afraid to be seen with him. “They feared that they would get in trouble,” he said. To keep an eye on Bloncourt, a supervisor moved into the adjoining cubicle for the next couple months.

Even the American flag became a casualty of Verizon’s war on the workers’ union campaign. Managers pulled down an American flag that Terry Skiest, a technician who had served in

both Afghanistan and Iraq, had hung outside his work cubicle in Acton, Mass. Managers told Skiest’s co-worker, Mike Wheeler, that the flags could be considered to be propaganda and “might be offensive to some workers.”

The action enraged and helped unite the workers, spurring hundreds of technicians up and down the East Coast to hang American flags in their own cubicles.

The tone of the company’s campaign surprised another returning veteran, John Lindner of Local 1101, after coming back to his job from tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. “We had to whisper when we talked about the union, but the company was bombarding us with anti-union e-mails all the time,” he said. “We did not get any equal free speech rights to express our views,” he said. “It was the company’s way or nothing.”